

Argument for the
Resurrection
of Jesus Christ.

T. H. Skinner.

BS2427
.S62

5.27.09

Library of the Theological Seminary

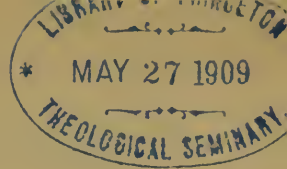
PRINCETON, N. J.

Division

BS2427

Section

362



THE ARGUMENT FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

J. H. Skinner

Humanly judging, it was a superhuman undertaking for a few Jews, poor fishermen of Galilee, and Saul of Tarsus, a disinherited son and recent convert, to establish the name and gospel of Jesus Christ in the chief cities of the Roman Empire, and so to establish them as to secure their eventual triumph throughout the whole world.

Here was a new thing upon the earth. There had been nothing like it in all previous history. There has been nothing like it in all subsequent history. No mind could deduce the idea of the actual person and career of Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures or from anything else. Those who took these Scriptures as the basis of their Messianic expectations, formed a totally different conception both of his person and his mission. Some time after his appearance in the world, there was found to be a marvellous congruity between the Old Testament statements and the living Christ of Galilee. They were the warp and woof of a divine fabric. The promises that ran through the Bible of a seed that should bruise the head of the serpent; of one in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; of a prophet like unto, but superior to, Moses; of a king, in comparison with whom David and Solomon were as nothing; of a priest before whom Melchizedek would pale—a priest upon a throne; of a Messiah who should be despised and rejected of his people, and suffer and die as an atoning sacrifice—all this became clear and vivid. But so intermingled and seemingly conflicting were these descriptions, that no Jew, no Gentile, ever had a just conception of the actual, veritable Christ in his mind before his advent, and no god or goddess, no priest, no king, no hero, no teacher, no martyr, no mortal, was ever heard of, that bore resemblance to him. And since his disappearance from the world, all the "false Christs" that arose in Judea, all reformers and propagators of

new religions, such as Mahomet, Swedenborg, Irving—all, of whatever country, name, or pretensions—have been so utterly unlike Jesus Christ as never rightfully to be named in comparison with him. He stands solitary and alone, alike in human history and in human mythology. He was an humble and obscure man, who wrought at the bench of a carpenter till he was thirty years of age, when he became a public teacher and reformer; proclaiming the highest morality ever taught on the earth; enforcing with utmost sanctions and personal example, supreme love to God, and a love to man like that to one's self; a love to the poor and neglected, to enemies and persecutors; honesty, integrity, and universal righteousness; courtesy, contentment, and chastity—all welling up from the secret life of the soul, from a new heart and a holy spirit. He inculcated a nobility, generosity, and magnanimity of character before unheard of, to be evinced in self-denials, self-sacrifices, and consecration to the good of others. And with all his personal humility and unearthly teaching, he boldly and persistently claimed to be the only Son and equal of the Eternal God—omniscient, omnipresent, and almighty; profoundly intimate, yea, one with the Father. He announced himself a king, the King of kings and Lord of lords, possessing all power, rule, and authority in heaven and on earth. The mightiest and proudest monarch and conqueror never dreamed of royalty so supreme, of dominion so vast and enduring. This strange, unique, before unconceived and inconceivable Person, spent three years in his ministry: a ministry filled with words and deeds of surpassing love, a love as incomprehensible as were either his person or his claims. By his strange and unhuman life he brought upon himself the enmity of priests and rulers and chief men of his people, which culminated in his arrest and trial before Pontius Pilate, followed by an ignominious death, and his burial in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea.

Such a life, closed by such a death, was utterly unanticipated, and in itself is a dark and insoluble enigma. He had proved himself possessed of ample power to prevent his execution and death, but he did not use it. He calmly, for reasons all-com-

manding to himself, chose to suffer, to agonise, to die. As he said, "No man taketh my life from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Now, according to the Scriptures, this enigmatical life and voluntary death of Christ are of the very essence of Christianity; and yet peculiar and marvellous as were that life and that death, had the career of Christ closed with his burial, there could have been no intelligible Old Testament, no New Testament, no Church, no Christendom, no hope of heaven, no salvation for man. His name would speedily have perished from among men. A dead Christ could not make a living religion. A crucified Christ, mouldering in the tomb, never could have moved and shaken to its centre and revolutionised the Roman Empire, and on the ruins of its idolatry and pagan civilisation built up historic Christendom. A dead Christ could awaken neither faith, nor hope, nor zeal, nor sacrifice in his cause. Nothing but disappointment, dismay, and despair on the part of his friends, would follow his final destruction. His death would be a death-blow to any religion he might have proclaimed in his life.

Thus we reach the one conclusive, all-interpreting, all-powerful fact, that Jesus, crucified, dead, and buried, *rose* from the dead. He came out of the tomb a living, immortal man. A more stupendous, transcendent event cannot be conceived, and it is impossible to exaggerate its importance. The religion, civilisation, and progress of Europe and America, are founded upon it. It is an event which throws back its radiance upon the death, life, and birth of Christ, upon all the Old Testament types and prophecies and promises; an event which created the New Testament, and gave vitality to Christian morality and faith and hope; an event which is more and more changing the face of the world, and is destined to purify and bless the earth with peace, righteousness, and all prosperity, and to crown the race with everlasting honor and glory.

This event formed the staple and substance of apostolic discourse. It was specifically for their testimony to this fact, that the apostles were selected and trained. "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but

to witnesses chosen of God, even to us." When Judas had hanged himself, Peter declared that one must be chosen and ordained in his stead, "to be a witness with us of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." The prominence thus given to this event was well and wisely ordered. The condition of the world was such, that, in laying the foundations of Christianity, it became absolutely necessary to insist upon and establish this as a regnant, outstanding, incontestable fact. It could not be treated as a subordinate and secondary matter.

There is abroad in the world a vast amount of thought and speculation whose tendencies and statements are such as to unsettle the Christian faith by unsettling and upheaving its deepest foundations. It is entrenched in the broad and noble domain of science, and is put forth, enforced, and illustrated by minds of unusual power and culture. It has penetrated and impressed large sections of society through books and lectures, magazines and tracts, and newspapers and conversations. In its spirit and tone, it is exceedingly dogmatic and confident, often contemptuous and flippant. Its pretensions are enormous. It aims at nothing less than the overthrow and annihilation of the venerable fabric of Christianity, and to place itself on the very throne of the universe.

The leaders of the school of thought to which we now refer have one general drift, if not avowed purpose, and that is to get rid of a personal and living God, and so of Christianity, by showing that he is wholly unnecessary in the assertion of the stability, unvariableness, unchangeableness, and omnipresence of what they call the laws or order of nature. These are accounted all-sufficient for all things, and, therefore, there is no place for God, or for Jesus Christ, as his only Son and our Redeemer. With them nature is all-inclusive. Anything beyond nature, anything above nature, anything other than nature, is denied as a sheer impossibility. Whether God, in the beginning, *created* the universe in substance and in germ, and disposed it in its orderly motion and progress, is a question which puzzles and baffles most of these teachers. But the universe once existing and put into working order, they all agree that any interference

with, any suspension, any alteration, of this order, is inadmissible. Providence and redemption are both excluded; and the Bible record of miracles and prophecies, of spiritual and eternal and divine revelations, the entire scheme of Christianity, is unreliable, unhistoric, legendary, and mythological.

Of course, if this absolute and universal proposition respecting nature and its laws could be established, if these men could prove their doctrine, there would be an end to our religion. If this proposition is true, there *can* be no real exceptions; apparent exceptions are only such in appearance, and must be explained away. We all agree in this. As the Apostle Paul, in an analogous case, argues, if the broad and absolute statement, "there be no resurrection of the dead," is correct, then it follows, inevitably, that Christ is not risen. But in both cases, the general and the specific, the proof is not yet produced. Such propositions, in their very nature, are incapable of demonstration. If all things, from the beginning of the creation, had continued to this day without interruption or change, this would not prove their inherent and necessary unchangeableness. The shining of a star ten millions of ages would not prove that that star would never cease to shine. If no man, not even Christ, had ever been raised from the dead, this would not prove that no one never would be in all the future. The mind of man is too limited to correct and arrange and pronounce judgment upon all the data requisite to such sweeping and momentous conclusions. And it is sad, inexpressibly sad, to see so many of our writers and speakers, so many of our bright and cultured young men and maidens, taken in the net of this pretentious, dazzling, and fascinating sophistry, that thus overrides and ignores the very first principles of logical reasoning.

Now, as we have seen, we are roundly, emphatically, told that a miracle, the supernatural, is impossible. To make this assertion is easy; to buttress the assertion with a great show of learning and plausible statement is very easy; but actually to prove it is another matter. If we can produce one miracle, a true, veritable, demonstrative, and divine interposition, which is above and other than the order of nature, this finishes and closes the

argument against the supernatural. Its foundations are destroyed and the superstructure falls and crumbles. There is nothing more to be said in its defence. The confident and proudly asserted proposition is gone: and we claim the miracles of the Bible, one and all, to be just such divine interpositions.

In making this broad claim, we are met with the reply, that these miracles, so called, are not properly attested; that, having been wrought among a very ancient, very ignorant and superstitious people, incapable of scientific judgment upon them, they are without exception improbable, and that most of them are absurd on their face—in fact, that they are impossible. This is a common answer to the claim we make. It is worked up after this manner: certain of the recorded miracles are selected which, taken by themselves, look very improbable, such as the standing still of the sun and moon in the valley of Ajalon; the falling of the walls of Jericho at the blast of the rams' horns; the speaking of Balaam's ass; Jonah in the belly of the fish three days and three nights; the three young Jews in the burning fiery furnace. And we are asked, Are such things credible? Are they not simply ridiculous, if taken for truth? They can only be creatures of a bold fancy; exaggerations of a people who deemed themselves the exclusive favorites of heaven; they are like the myths and legends of unhistoric periods in other nations. And these, being thus disposed of, of course the Book that reports them is discredited as a sober and serious revelation from God, no better than the works of Plutarch, or Zoroaster, or Mohammed.

All this, which is supplementary to the fundamental scientific position of our adversaries, may be considered very shrewd and smart—a happy way of putting contempt upon the ablest and best minds of the last eighteen centuries. But is this sound reasoning? Is this a fair or honorable method of treating the foundations of that religion, which, with all its perversions and abuses, has been the mightiest power for good in human history?

The central miracle of the Bible, that which gives meaning, probability, and certainty to all the rest, and to all the teachings of the Book, is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Strauss says "it forms the central point of the centre, the very heart of Christianity." And he justly appreciates the importance and magnitude of his task, when he adds, "Here we stand, at the decisive point where we must either retract all that has gone before, and give up our whole enterprise, or we must pledge ourselves to explain the origin of faith in the resurrection of Jesus without a corresponding miraculous fact." The whole life-work of Strauss, he himself confesses, fails, unless he succeeds in disproving this miracle. It is the one, the only, key to the Scriptures, the clue to a labyrinth which else is an utter maze and mystery, the light streaming through all the ages from the creation to the judgment, from Paradise lost to Paradise regained. This was the view of the Apostle Paul. Nothing in all the past, nothing in all the future, was of any value except as "Jesus and the Resurrection" gave it value. If this miracle could not be established, the Bible could not rightly command the obedience of men as the Book of God. "If the dead rise not," says he, "then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain and your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." As if he had said—nothing is, if this is not. Unless He was raised again for our justification, we are still condemned and lost. The whole argument for a divine religion is surrendered by the Apostle, if Christ was not raised from the dead; and he, with the most unshaken confidence, with the completest satisfaction of his reason, his judgment, and his heart, hinged everything, for time and for eternity, upon it. It is perfectly evident, that if Christ was raised from the dead, then the proposition that miracles are impossible is once and for all disproved. And next, all the miracles of the Bible are put upon their proper basis, and their peculiar character ceases to be an objection against them, and as they are part and parcel of an entire scheme of Divine Revelation, they become not only not difficult, but easy, of credit and acceptance.

Yea, and more: such an indispensable corner-stone is the resurrection of Christ, that if, previously, every other miracle of the Bible had been received, the failure to sustain this will cause the entire arch of divine revelation to fall to pieces.

What then are we to do in order to settle beyond all fair controversy, and to justify the faith of Christendom in the fundamental, all-verifying miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ? How are we to hold and defend against all comers this most stupendous, transcendent, supernatural truth of our religion?

The thing to be proved is not simply that a man, named and known, tried and condemned, crucified and slain, as Jesus of Nazareth, was raised from the dead. This is all-important, absolutely essential; but it by no means concludes the case. For Lazarus, the widow of Nain's son, and others, might be proved to have been raised from the dead, thus demonstrating the intervention of divine power, but this would not establish our religion. A mere physical resurrection puts the seal of Divinity on no one. It does not prove the sanctity or the authority of its subject. It gives no validity to his previous sentiments or conduct. What we must establish is not only this, but that this man thus raised was the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Life, the incarnate Son of God, and man's Redeemer. The two are inseparable. Unless we can establish in an authoritative and unanswerable manner that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ declared him to be, what he claimed to be, and what the Old Testament Scriptures asserted him to be, God's only and co-equal Son incarnate, we fail in our effort. This was Peter's argument. They killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead. We think it will be made clear that without the Resurrection there can be no demonstration of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and without his divinity there can be no sure proof of his resurrection.

Moreover, the word *Resurrection*, when applied to Jesus Christ, means *immensely more* than it does when applied to any other persons alleged to have been raised from the dead. Theirs was a mere revivification or resurrection. ^{See Peter's} They were still subject to infirmity and sickness and accident and pain and death. In fact they all died again. The true idea of the scripture doctrine

of the Resurrection is, that while it is a resurrection of the same body that was dead and buried, it is a resurrection to a new, a deathless, life. As Canon Westcott says: "It is not a restoration to the old life, to its wants, to its special limitations, to its inevitable close, but the revelation of a new life, foreshadowing new powers of action and a new mode of being. It issues not in death, but in the ascension. It is not an extension of an existence with which we are acquainted, but the manifestation of an existence for which we hope. It is not the putting off of the body, but the transfiguration of it." Neither can they die any more, said our Lord. The children of *this world* die, but the children of the Resurrection are the children of *God*, and therefore, are, like the angels, incapable of death. And so, Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more. Death can have no more dominion over him. Hence he is said to be the *first* that rose from the dead; the *first* fruits of them that slept; the *first* begotten of the dead; the *first* born from the dead. It was a resurrection that put him out of the category of mortality; that gave to his body, properties and qualities such as are described by Paul; making it incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual, and immortal. The Resurrection of Christ is so prominent and paramount, so singular and transcendent, that all the other resurrections recorded in Scripture fade out of sight by its side. His is *The Resurrection—The Life*. This is what is meant when we speak of the Resurrection of Christ.

And yet again, the argument is apologetic and not dogmatic. It is intended as a demonstration to the human mind, as such,—to man, not as renewed and illumined by grace, not as depraved and alienated by wicked works, but to man as man, as a rational and moral being. Miracles are signs to them that believe not. And this stupendous, all-including, miracle has, preëminently this adaptation and power. We take the record as we find it, and treat it just as we treat any other record.

There are two lines of evidence, two factors in the argument, distinct and separate, yet mutually concurrent, and they together constitute a logical and moral demonstration of the highest conceivable order. Neither without the other is conclusive, but welded into one, they are irresistible.

These are: 1. The Testimony of the Witnesses; and 2. The foregoing Scriptures.

The former of these, in our argument on the subject, will first be considered. That testimony is positive, manifold, continuous, to the effect that Jesus Christ according to the flesh was raised from the dead. The honesty and integrity of the witnesses are unimpeached. The sincerity and strength of their convictions reached to the endurance of all manner of persecution and of martyrdom. Their competency as witnesses is a fair question of discussion, but on general grounds it must be allowed. And this brings us to the heart of the matter,—just what it was to which they bore witness. It is the popular method and common among preachers and writers to say that they witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But this, while practically correct, is not strictly accurate and does not give the precise facts of the case. Omitting the subject of the harmonistic accounts of the resurrection with their difficulties, let us simply state the nature of the evidence that is given. It is that of the testimony of the human senses—of touch, hearing, and sight, appropriately reported and authenticated. These senses have to do only with sensible things—with the objects handled, heard, and seen.

That Jesus Christ lived in Palestine, a man among men, is known, just as we know that Alexander, Hannibal, Nero, Socrates, Plato, and Plutarch lived, each a man among men. Their fellow-men saw, heard, handled them; walked and ate and drank with them; and competent contemporary writers recorded their lives and deeds. We have not the least difficulty in believing their testimony. The person and life of Jesus Christ were evidenced in precisely the same way; only the records are far more authentic, and can far more easily be sifted, compared, and verified. On this point argument is needless. Those who deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ, admit in that very denial his existence and life before his death.

That he was crucified, died, and was buried, are facts known just as the fact of the death and burial of any other man is known. The proofs of death and burial are proofs to the senses of men, and they are so sure, so demonstrative, that probably

not one person out of a hundred million is buried when he is not dead. The evidences of the actual death of Christ are now, by the most extreme critical school, admitted to be full and complete, and by those with whom we are now dealing, no attempt is made to discredit the fact of his death any more than of his life: their whole argument turns upon the impossibility of his resurrection, and this because it would be a contradiction, a violation of inviolable laws. Nevertheless as we shall see, this impossible event was possible, and did actually occur: the dead Christ did live again; the buried Christ did come out of the tomb.

Now, this fact is known, precisely as the facts of his previous life, death, and burial are known—through the *senses* of those who bore witness on the subject; and the records of the evidence are received precisely as the records of the evidence of the existence of any man who lived in the past, are received.

No one of these witnesses pretends to have seen Christ rise from the dead. No one saw the reanimation of his dead body; no one saw the first signs of life; no one saw the process of the transcendent resuscitation and reunion of the soul and body. All this is beyond the range of any testimony that is offered or exists. We perfectly agree with our adversaries when they tell us “that it is not of the nature of human testimony to reach to the supernatural.” They cannot urge this more strongly than we do. But their urging it reveals the essential weakness of their position. They are fighting a man of straw. They totally misapprehend the *point* of the gospel evidence, the subject-matter of the New Testament attestations. They hold that a demonstration of the inadequacy of testimony to prove the supernatural cause, settles the whole question. On the other hand, we hold that it has nothing to do with it. The inscrutable *cause* of the resurrection is a very different thing from the fact of the resurrection, and it is on this and on this alone that the testimony bears. This, as the most cursory reading of the Evangelists shows, is all they profess to prove. Their testimony relates, simply and only, to the living presence, the actual existence among men, of Jesus Christ subsequently to his crucifixion, death, and burial. And what we affirm is, that on this subject the evidence is of the very

same kind, just as sufficient, just as conclusive, as is that of his having been previously a living man and his having died. All the narratives relate to this simple, sensible, most easily demonstrated fact. Christ was alive again after he had been dead. The miracle—the supernatural, causal agency that effected the resurrection—as we shall see, will take care of itself. Let us illustrate this.

Suppose that some of the members of a church, who had known their pastor for several years, had been absent from the place of their residence during the three weeks previous to a given Sabbath and had returned on the Saturday night preceding. They occupy their places on the Sabbath morning in the sanctuary. They see the form, the face, the motions, the gestures of their pastor; they hear and note his familiar tones and accents. His personal, living, real presence, is, to them, a fact beyond all question. They would take their oaths upon it the next day. No matter what might have happened to him during their absence, the evidence of their eyes and ears would be demonstrative to their minds that he was there, standing before and speaking to them. He might, like Paul, have been caught up to the third heavens during their absence. He might like Lazarus, or the daughter of Jairus, or Christ, have died; if he stands before them, accredited by their senses a living man, then he so stands, their indubitable, actual, living pastor. Should a thousand persons tell them that during their absence he had been struck dead, and that they had followed him to the tomb, it would not alter their convictions; they might doubt the declarations, but they would not doubt their senses. And if to Christ's contemporaries the very same proof, which thus compels the assurance and confidence that he, whom these parishioners had so well-known, is the very same person who preached on the Sabbath morning named, if that very evidence was given to them, only increasingly and from week to week, with additional, tangible, ocular, and audible signs and proofs, then, unless their veracity and competency as human hand and eye and ear witnesses, can be impeached, their testimony becomes conclusive,—demonstrative beyond all cavil.

Many things have been written on the fallibility and unreli-

ability of the testimony of the senses, and doubtless men have often been deceived, and have only thought they saw and heard and handled the objects they declared existed; but notwithstanding this, the evidence, the normal evidence, of the senses, within their own proper domain, is ordinarily infallible. The correction of mistakes is easy, and on most matters, on matters such as that now before us, there are no mistakes to be corrected. The actual existence of the houses, streets, trees, the horses, wagons, carriages, the men, women, and children we are conversant with through our senses, is undoubted, indubitable. Dead persons are known to be dead, and living persons are known to be living, and the simple statement of the fact by those with whom they are connected, settles the matter in all parts of the world.

The testimonial narrative of the resurrection of Christ, in his bodily form, is most simple, most natural, most satisfactory. We have not space to recite it. It is very noticeable that no other test than that of the senses—the senses of persons who had known him long and well and were fully qualified to identify him, is suggested. Eye witnesses, ear witnesses, hand witnesses, give their testimony. They saw, heard, and handled the man Christ Jesus, just as they had done for three years previously. They knew him during those forty days through the same senses by which they had known him during those three years. It is, in all the circumstances, utterly absurd to suppose that the man whom they thus recognised, was not the same Jesus they had known before, but a stranger imposing on them with prints of nails in his hands and feet, and a spear wound in his side. It is equally absurd to suppose that they saw and heard and handled, and talked and walked and ate and drank with a ghost, a human shadow, during those six weeks. Had they known nothing of his death and met him afterwards, it would be precisely the same. If some of his disciples had gone to Rome a few months before his crucifixion, and having heard nothing of his death, had returned during the forty days and met him at the Sea of Galilee, would they not be just as good, just as strong, just as reliable witnesses to his person and presence then as they were before?

Until the evidence of the common senses of men about things most palpable, most easily discerned and known, about the existence, presence, and speech of living human beings, and about the death and burial of such beings—until this, which lies at the foundation of everything connected with the life of man on earth, is done away with and made of no account, the fact of Christ's resurrection must stand. To deny that Jesus Christ was alive when so many men asserted his being actually present with, visible to, audible by them, is to overturn the foundations of all historical knowledge, and empty the past of all reality. The resurrection itself was not seen; the miracle itself could not be directly attested by the senses. The New Testament does not attempt to do anything more than to produce abundant evidence that Jesus Christ lived, died, and lived again; and these are external, material, sensible facts, each and all of them being verified by the senses of men. As Luke says, "He showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." This is all and this is enough. The miracle, the interposition of almighty power effecting the stupendous result, arresting and reversing the order of nature, is not the subject of human observation and testimony. This *is an inference* which the mind spontaneously, instinctively, and irresistibly draws from the facts observed by the senses. The laws of the mind compel the conclusion. We do not reason about it; we take it by an immediate, instant intuition. Did those women, those disciples, those apostles, those hundreds of his followers, did their eyes see Jesus Christ alive after his death, did their ears hear him, did their hands handle him? If they did, then *God* must have raised him from the dead. The miracle took place. By what right do men who accept the testimony of the senses to the fact of Christ's life before his crucifixion, turn about and impeach its validity to the fact of his life after his crucifixion? Either there is no evidence that Christ did live on earth at all before his death, or there is just as valid evidence that he did live after his death. Either Christ rose from the dead or he never existed on earth. Prove to us that he

ever lived among men, and we will prove that he rose from the dead by the same evidence. Deny that he rose from the dead, and we defy any mortal to prove that he ever appeared on the earth.

Thus far the way is clear; the proof full and decisive; the argument unanswerable, as to the corporeal resurrection of Christ. But now there comes in, what, at first sight, is a disturbing element. The question which we regarded as settled emerges again, and the *competency* of these human witnesses is brought into doubt. For we find them, in the same breath with their other testimony, witnessing to things pertaining to the risen Christ which hardly come into the category of the ordinary and usually accepted evidence of the senses. As long as that evidence goes to prove Jesus Christ to be precisely the same identical Jesus of flesh and bones and frame and physical properties and qualities he was before his death, it is justly available. But these same witnesses, with equal positiveness and assurance testify to an altogether unusual and utterly unparalleled condition of his humanity, preceding this by the assertion that two spirits, angels from the unseen world, in the form of young men, sat upon the stone at the door of the sepulchre, and spake to the women who first visited the tomb; they tell us that this risen Christ could, and that not by a miraculous energy, but in a way proper and natural to his body, by what Augustine calls "a certain ineffable facility of movement," appear and disappear without perceptible motion, could sit at a table and eat and drink and engage in conversation after a walk of several miles, and then suddenly, without a rustle or change of position, vanish out of sight, as by an invisible cap; that he could and did appear again and again, and without opening a door or taking a visible or audible step, or causing a disciple to change his place, make himself visible, standing in the midst of the room where the eleven disciples were seated, so that on the first occasion, "they were terrified and affrighted and supposed they had seen a spirit;" they took him for a phantom, a spectre, a shade. And in this most marvellous state of things he verifies himself to them by assuring them, "It is I myself," and making them handle his

flesh and bones, and ordering a meal to be prepared, eats with them fish and honey. And a week after, by a like apparition of himself to the eleven, he, "the doors again being shut," stands in their midst and salutes them, and presents to Thomas his pierced hands and open side, and says, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side," than which nothing could be more incredible, if the body of Christ was a simple natural body, such as it was before his death. Who could bear such a movement on his freshly pierced hands and side, the wounds being unhealed, undressed, and open? We read that on a certain occasion "he appeared," ἐφανερώθη, phantomised himself, "in another," a different, "form." The account of his appearance at the sea of Galilee seems to be after the same extraordinary manner, so that "none of his disciples durst ask him, Who art thou?" No hint is given of any place where he abode, of any house where he slept, or of his being in any way dependent on food or drink. He comes, no one knows from whence. He goes, no one knows whither. And at last having gone with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, he, without an effort, as by an inherent force, by a gentle motion, rises from the ground, and, contrary to all the known laws of nature, rises and still rises and moves upward till a cloud receives him out of their sight, and he is no more seen on earth by them; an angel informing them that he had gone into heaven, and Mark declaring that "he sat on the right hand of God." How he knew this he does not say. Such is the additional strange, astounding testimony of the witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, out of which both ancient and modern criticism has educed a vast amount of difficulties and self-contradictory explanations.

Now if these witnesses should have affirmed these things, of Lazarus, for example, or of any mere man, we venture to say that their testimony would not be received. Testimony to the simple and single fact that Lazarus or Christ was alive at any time after his death, is valid testimony; but testimony affirming the possession by Lazarus or Christ of a body whose properties were superhuman and at the same time human, subject to the

senses of other men and at the same time independent of them, alike visible or invisible, tangible or intangible, local or illocal, at his will, now here and now there without apparent motion, ascribing, in the language of theology, to the resurrection body of Christ, *invisibilitas, illocalitas, impalpabilitas*—such testimony would be received, not only with great incredulity, but it would go far to undermine their testimony to that which, in its own nature, should command confidence. As we have seen, such a body is the very body the Scripture idea of the resurrection implies and demands; yet the proof of it can hardly be reached in the same way that the fact of his resurrection in the very physical body in which he had lived before he died is reached.

To illustrate the difficulty now before us: We are sitting here together, say in the city of Chicago in the month of May, 1880. The door is opened—we turn our eyes towards it and see a white man enter and shut it. We watch him. As we look a sudden change passes over him. He becomes a negro. His skin turns black, his hair turns woolly, his nose becomes flat, his lips thick, his chin projecting. He is as clearly, palpably, a full-blooded negro, as he was, just before, a white man. We approach him, we examine him, we speak to him, and our convictions are confirmed. Now we go out and report this. We are honest men, sincere men, with no temptation to falsehood. We assert this transformation as a fact. Would we be believed? Would others be bound to believe us? If we told them that we saw a man enter the place and shut the door, and stand before us none would doubt us; but when we declare that we saw that man suddenly change into a perfect negro, even sensible men would hear us with a certain incredulity. There would be a temptation to treat our witness as we treat that of those “spiritualists,” who testify to the materialisation in the air of a departed spirit, whom we regard as, when honest, deceived. Our hearers would perhaps be reluctant to concede in our favor the rule of evidence (which is indisputably solid): that good and sufficient testimony proves any statements whatsoever which are not self-contradictory, or absolutely impossible. Hence it would be practically very important that our testimony should have the confirmation

of admitted predictions. Our supposed instance gives but an imperfect illustration of the force of the Apostolic testimony to Christ's resurrection; for we are not supposed to have died to seal our testimony to the event in Chicago, as the Apostles did. The witnesses to the resurrection sealed their title to be believed, notwithstanding the wonderfulness of the event testified. Still, the scepticism would be not unnatural. Hence the value of prophetic confirmation.

But now—and here we pass to the second line of evidence, viz., the testimony of the foregoing Scriptures—now suppose, that, in connexion with our testimony as to this strange and unprecedented event, a book should be produced which had been in existence a thousand years; a well known, extensively circulated, often quoted, most valued book; and that in this book it should be found written, that in the year 1880, in the month of May, six persons should meet in a room at a place called Chicago, in a country then undiscovered and unknown, and that while they were together, a man should enter the room, and standing before them would suddenly be changed into a negro. Such a record, the record of such a prophecy, in such detail, would at once change the whole aspect of our testimony. Unless it could be shown that we were dishonest men, making up the story on purpose, its truth would be instantly demonstrated to the mind. It would be divinely certified and established. Such a prophecy in such olden time, could not have come by the will of man. Only God could have foreseen and foretold the event. Our testimony would be verified beyond debate. The seal of God would be upon it. What was difficult of credit on our bare word becomes, not only a fact to be believed, but a fact which must be believed unless we would make God a liar. If this would be so in a simple and single effect like this, then, if we can find a book concerning Jesus Christ, a book written hundreds of years before his advent, and giving in minute detail times and places and circumstances as to his birth and ministry and sufferings and death and burial and resurrection, and giving them in such a way that by no possibility could the Evangelists and Apostles have made up the story of his life and death and resurrection to match the

foregoing ancient accounts, then our faith in the corresponding events when actually occurring and appropriately witnessed to and attested becomes not only rational and logical, but a religious duty; for that faith would rest not simply on human testimony, but on divine and infallible testimony. The Bible indubitably is such a book, and the Old Testament is justly styled the testimony of Jesus.

The resurrection of Christ as the only and eternal Son of God incarnate, (and it is only thus that it is worth our concern,) is dependent upon the foregoing Scriptures for its authentication and authority. That event, if standing by itself and witnessed to by the evangelists only, would present difficulties: but when combined with the Old Testament Scriptures, it becomes luminous and effective and conclusively, divinely, true. Faith in it is faith in God himself; and that which, at first sight, created doubts as to the entire story, becomes itself an absolutely essential part of the stupendous miracle. It is just as important to have proof of the true *resurrection character* of the body of Jesus, as it is to have proof of the simple fact of his corporeal revivification. It is the miracle of the eternal Son of God incarnate rising by the exceeding greatness of God's power in a body of immortal permanence, power, and glory, the pattern and the pledge of the like resurrection of his people. Consider those words of John: "When he was risen from the dead, his disciples believed the Scriptures." "For as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead;" and hence the empty towel and the neatly laid clothes and the napkin folded by itself were no proofs to them of his resurrection. Our Lord declares that the Scriptures by themselves were all sufficient to demonstrate his resurrection. He said to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and *all* the prophets, he expounded unto them in *all* the Scriptures the things concerning himself. No wonder, that after he vanished out of their sight, they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the

Scriptures? And in the evening of that same day when he stood in the midst of the eleven, he told them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things—not only witnesses of my resurrection, but of God's foregoing testimony to it. The strength and power of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost consisted in the proof of the resurrection of Jesus to immortality and so of his divinity and Messiahship, not merely from the testimony of the witnesses, but, fundamentally, from the foregoing Scriptures "in which God had showed by the mouth of all the prophets these things," and especially, from the sixteenth Psalm. He closed his argument in these words: "Therefore, David, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up. whereof we all are witnesses." And so at Cesarea, he said to Cornelius, of Jesus, "whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly. To him give all the prophets witness." This was the drift and overwhelming force of Stephen's testimony, bringing the Old Testament Scriptures to bear upon the fact of the risen and ascended Jesus.

This was the sum and substance of Philip's demonstration, from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, to the eunuch. This was Paul's argument at Antioch. "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This was his argument

at Thessalonica. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." He declared to Agrippa that he said none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come. And at Rome, he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets. And in his sublime demonstration of the resurrection of Christ, in the fifteenth chapter of I. Corinthians, before he recounts the testimony of the eye-witnesses of the resurrection, he is careful to lay the foundation of their faith in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, by which that testimony is made vital and valid. "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, unless ye have believed in vain. *For* I delivered unto you, *first of all*, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, *according to the Scriptures*; and that he was buried; and that he rose again the third day, *according to the Scriptures.*" And he sums up this whole doctrine of the foregoing Scriptures, when he says to Timothy, "The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation."

The subject is endless. It is insisted upon in the Gospels, in the Acts, in the Epistles, and in the Apocalypse. The foregoing Scriptures are the bed-rock of our faith in the testimony of the Evangelists and the Apostles. And it is worthy of note, that our Lord's ministry on earth, his whole life and work, are made largely dependent for their sanctions upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament. How often does he refer to them, quote from them, and establish his claims from their utterances? He proves his mission, his divinity, his incarnation, his authority, by means of them. His miracles, it is true, authenticated his supernal teachings and august demands to those to whom he spoke; but the foregoing Scriptures attest the validity of his claims, with a clear and shining witness, to all ages and peoples. "That it might be fulfilled," "it is written," and the like, are words which

illumine the pages of the Evangelists. And we know with what resistless logic he silenced the opposing Jews, and dispelled the illusions of their traditions and misinterpretations, by making those Scriptures testify against them and for himself. Their fundamental error consisted in "not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God." Being what they were, they were the testimony of God himself to him; as he declares, "The Father himself which hath sent me hath borne witness of me. And ye have not his *word* abiding in you. Search the Scriptures. They are they which testify of me. Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" A stronger assertion of our argument could scarcely be made. Such was the Old Testament Scripture in its testimony to Christ before his resurrection. And as the resurrection was the seal, consummation, and crown of his whole life, without which his advent and incarnation, his miracles and teachings, his sacrifice and death, would have been unavailing, so it is preëminently and most luminously witnessed to by that Scripture. This makes our faith in the resurrection of Christ to stand, not in the wisdom, the honesty, the fidelity, of human testimony, but in the omniscience of God; even the words of the Holy Spirit testifying by the prophets, beforehand, of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. This makes our faith not a human, but a divine, not an historic, but a supernatural, faith. For faith in the *supersensible*, in the *supernatural*, the divine, on the uninspired testimony of finite, fallible, men, cannot be a scientific, much less a religious faith. It cannot be saving. It cannot be acceptable to God. It cannot be binding on the conscience. It is at best a venture, an uncertain and presumptuous venture. Such testimony is too weak a basis to sustain the enormous weight of a divine revelation of spiritual, unseen, eternal things. We must "believe the Lord our God himself, if we would be established; we must believe his prophets, if we would prosper." If we would believe the Lord Jesus, we must first believe the foregoing Scriptures in their testimony concerning him. That was a weighty word of our Lord, "If I bear witness of myself, my

witness is not true"; and, "if ye believe not the writings of Moses, how shall ye believe my words?" This affords an invincible demonstration of the supreme, most transcendent, and all-essential miracle of the Bible. "This," as Calvin says, "creates a *conviction* which asks not for reasons; a *knowledge* which accords with the highest reason, namely, knowledge in which the mind rests more firmly and securely than in any reasons; such, in fine, the conviction which revelation from heaven alone can produce."

Take from the argument for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ this element, this factor, of the foregoing Scriptures; in other words, take out inspiration, and the testimony of the witnesses loses its force. That testimony cannot, by itself, sustain the burden. The divine witness in prophecy must be added. Either without the other fails. Only in the combination of the two is the fact established. And as in the incarnation, in regeneration, and in revelation, so in this fact of the resurrection of Christ, the divine and human are correlated and essential to the argument. It is as impossible to prove the divinity of the historic Christ without the incarnation as it is to prove the resurrection of the divine Christ without inspiration.¹

¹ Since the foregoing paper was written, an article has appeared in the April number of the PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW on the subject of inspiration, under the signatures of the Rev. Dr. A. A. Hodge, of Princeton, and the Rev. Dr. Warfield, of Allegheny, whose fundamental position contravenes the views we have presented. Their article maintains that "the general truth of Christianity and its doctrines must be established before we come to the question of inspiration," *i. e.*, "the fallen condition of man, the fact of a redemptive scheme, the general historical truth of the Scriptures, and the validity and authority of the revelation of God's will which they contain," must be proved to be verities before the question of the inspiration of the record, which gives them to mankind, is settled. The doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Regeneration, Justification, Adoption, the Mission and Work of the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment, must first be believed on human declarations considered apart from their inspiration. These writers add: "In dealing with sceptics it is not proper to begin with the evidence which immediately establishes inspiration, but we should first establish theism, then the historical credibility of the Scriptures, and then the divine origin

To constitute a true resurrection body, it was needful that both the sets of attributes and qualities ascribed to that of Christ should be present; while testimony that would be valid to the one would fail as to the other. The testimony as to Christ's being physically alive after his death is complete so far as it goes, and may be regarded as independent of inspiration; it is the testimony of the senses to a sensible object appropriately reported. But the testimony of the senses as to his being illocal, invisible, impalpable, immortal, fails to produce that certainty without which a true resurrection body cannot be affirmed. Wherefore, to this supernatural fact the foregoing inspired Scriptures, by their supernatural divine testimony, affords the link wanting in the chain of

of Christianity. Nor should we ever allow it to be believed that the truth of Christianity depends upon any doctrine of inspiration whatever." (P. R., p. 227.) In like manner, the Rev. Dr. Patton, on page 371 of the same REVIEW, says, "The apologete may, and sometimes must, defend Christianity as a supernatural and revealed religion, on grounds that do not assume the inspiration of the Scriptures." This apologetic method of establishing Christianity on the basis of the credibility of the penmen of Scripture, considered simply as honest and candid men, has been recently maintained by such men as Canon Browne, Dr. Bannerman, and Dr. Cairns, as well as by the writers just named among ourselves. Men more earnest and true to the faith of the Church cannot be found, and it is with utmost diffidence, yet with strong convictions, that we question the soundness of their position. Their intention is most laudable, and wholly in the interest of the truth of God: the effort is to silence scepticism on its own ground. The point we raise, and which we hope will be thoroughly considered in the Church, is, whether more is not lost than is gained by the new method; whether, in putting inspiration into the background, we do not logically yield the whole matter of an authentic revelation of God obligatory on man, and sacrifice the very thing we aim to preserve?

If the preceding argument on the resurrection of Christ is correct, then there is no "question of inspiration" to be raised. It demonstrates itself to the mind, just as does the miraculous element in the resurrection of our Lord. It is an immediate and necessary inference, and has all the force of intuitive truth. The difficulties we have urged as to the insufficiency of the testimony of the witnesses, by itself and apart from the foregoing Scriptures, to the resurrection of Christ, are in principle difficulties that pertain to all attempts to establish the supernatural by mere human testimony. A revelation from God may prove itself to the person

evidence, and makes that chain golden, binding heaven and earth, time and eternity, God and man, in indissoluble everlasting union.

The body in which Christ was raised was the very same individual, identical body in which he was born and lived and died and was buried. But a marvellous change passed upon it. It was more than transfigured. It was no longer a terrestrial, but a celestial, no longer a natural, but a spiritual, no longer an earthly, but a heavenly, body. New properties and qualities, a new life, a freedom from former limitations and dependence and subjection to natural laws and material conditions, signalled it. It was his own true human body, but it was incorruptible, powerful, spiritual, glorious, and immortal. It was competent by its constitution and transformation, like Moses and Elijah, to dwell, now in the highest heavens with angelic spirits, and now to stand on Mt. Hermon, subject to the very same laws of gravitation and physical relations, as were the three disciples who stood by their side. "The narratives," says Steinmeyer, "force us to infer a higher bodily organism, such as was needed by the Risen One in order to dispense the gift of the Spirit. They force us to infer a material body,

to whom that revelation is made. Inspiration is not in the case. His unattested declaration, by word of mouth or by writing, of that revelation, can only prove his own belief of its truth. It cannot command our faith in his faith of it. When Moses said to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord," Pharaoh rightly demanded, "Shew a miracle for you," *i. e.*, Give me a divine attestation of your divine authority.

The genuineness and authenticity of the sacred historical records are by no means equivalent to their *credibility*. This latter must be settled on other grounds. The whole question of the credibility of the records of alleged supernatural revelations must finally be resolved into supernatural attestations of the same. Apart from inspiration, they are so interwoven and penetrated with the supernatural, the miraculous, the unusual, the marvellous, that even ordinary historical statements must be corroborated by outside evidence to make them credible.

Drs. Hodge and Warfield say that inspiration is "fundamental to the adequate interpretation of Scripture." This is true beyond all question. An inadequate interpretation will not satisfy a sceptic or any one else. Scripture is its own interpreter. Otherwise Scripture ceases to be the supreme authority in matters of religion, and reason usurps its place. Strauss clearly saw this, and presented it with great force. (See "The Old Faith and the New," London, 1873, pp. 103, 104.)—T. H. S.

such as the Lord could appear to the disciples in. But they conjoin both kinds of characteristics so naively, intertwine them so firmly, and interweave them so closely, that their apparent contradictoriness did not occur to the narrators; but in fact there is no contradiction, for it is the same body which appears, and the same which retires into the invisible world." And Lange, in his *Life of Christ*, says, "He stood before them with a true body, and yet free as a spirit in his' bodily movements; belonging to the *other* world, and yet endued with the powers and qualities of *this* world; belonging to *this* world, and yet possessing the attributes of the other, or rather as the perfected King of the great kingdom of God which exists in both worlds;" and we may add, in all worlds.

Such was the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and such is the nature and value of the evidence by which God establishes it. The two lines of evidence, divine and human, meet and blend and become the sun-like demonstration of the most marvellous event in the history of the universe: an event that proves the divinity of the testimony that described it in the preceding centuries, and so verifies the testimony of the witnesses who declared it when it took place; an event which makes the incarnation a necessity, and so an indubitable reality; an event which constitutes the shining orb of humanity, flooding heaven and earth with its radiance, illuminating the distant past and the eternal future.

In and of itself the argument from the foregoing Scriptures proves nothing till their fulfilment. The issue must confirm it. As our Lord, again and again, says, "I tell you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe." The authentication, by miracle, of the prophet at the time, is outside of the case in our apologetic argument. But when actually fulfilled, its divinity is established for the ages. The fulfilment verifies and ratifies the prophecy, and the prophecy verifies and ratifies the fulfilment. The foregoing Scriptures that were demonstrated in the crucifixion and burial of our Lord gave assurance of the foretold resurrection. But that resurrection alone made the demonstration complete that the salvation of God for man is recorded in the Bible; for, as we have already said, if

Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. They also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished; and we of all men are most miserable. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." "He was delivered for our offences." "He died for our sins." But "he rose again for our justification," without which resurrection his atonement would have been nugatory and valueless. His resurrection makes his ascension and session at God's right hand, and so his intercession and regnancy in glory, absolute certainties.

The body of Christ to-day, on the throne of God in heaven, is the very same body which was crucified by Pontius Pilate, dead, and buried. In all the visions of the Apocalypse, it is seen radiant in ineffable glory, but marked with the prints of the nails and the deep wound of the spear. And it is endowed with the same qualities and powers it possessed during the forty days of his resurrection life on earth. By its "resurrection power," it is capable of changing back again so as to be seen and handled by men, even as it was, when, like a phantom, it appeared and stood in the closed room at Jerusalem. The marks of the nails and the spear will be as evident to the sight and the touch as they then were. For by and by, this same Jesus who was taken up from the Mount of Olives on earth to the throne of God in heaven, shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven. Then every eye shall see him and every ear shall hear him, and the senses of men, infallible in their testimony, will re-verify the incarnation and resurrection of the Son of God in a local, visible, palpable form. The Lord himself, the very identical human Jesus, shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; all kindreds shall wail because of him, and call on the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, as they shall look on him whom they despised and rejected. And the believing and ransomed ones shall gaze adoringly upon their King in his beauty, and sing triumphantly the praises of him who washed them in his blood from their sins, and who receives

them to himself and changes their earthly and mortal bodies into the likeness of his own, and they too become incorruptible, spiritual, powerful, glorious, and immortal.

Thus the resurrection of Christ as the incarnate Son of God is the key that opens the treasure-house of divine revelations and stamps the seal of inspiration upon the entire sacred record from Genesis to the Apocalypse, even as the inspired record of the revelations stamps infallibility on the testimony of the Evangelists and Apostles to the resurrection of Jesus. This is not reasoning in a circle, but it is the creation of a circle which is continent of our whole religion. It relegates all questions of criticism, philosophy, and science to their proper domain, and leaves us the Bible as the sure word of God, inspired, infallible, authoritative, binding on the human conscience and understanding and heart, which ministers can preach and their hearers believe, without hesitation or distraction, amid all manner of opposition, from whatsoever quarter that opposition may come. ✓

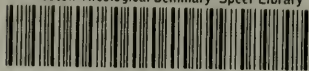
THOMAS H. SKINNER.

DATE DUE

~~FEB 19 1996~~

BS2427 .S62
The argument for the resurrection of

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00082 4872